

## “GODSTICK” HEAD FROM KATIKATI

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At the same time as the bird-headed bowl second fragment (Simmons, this volume), a “godstick” head (Figs. 1, 2) was found at grid reference NZMS1 N53 part 54/448820. The identification as “godstick” is made in view of it probably being the head of a ritual baton used in religious ceremonies. The total length of the piece is 16.5cm, maximum width 6.3cm. The wood is probably totara.

A baton in Auckland Museum (37148), found at Te Puke by Mrs T. Gilpin in 1960, has a similar knob decorated with an Oceanic type smooth stylized, though naturalistic face, with raised eyes, straight nose and realistic lips. From beneath the lips to a point halfway up the nose is an incised line, like a single tattoo line. The baton has a round shaft 2.5cm in diameter leading to a stylized penis with two circular “ear” projections on either side of the base. The underneath line and either side of the groove marking the *glans penis* are decorated with notches. At the top base of the penis an oval hole has been cut and hollowed out in the length of the shaft. Size of this hole is 2.5cm long by 1.4cm wide, the interior hole penetrating up the shaft for about 6cm. The overall length of the baton is 34cm, the head 11.5cm, the shaft 13.5cm, and the penis 9cm in length. The tip of the penis is, from the back, keeled and decorated with notches. Notches are used as the normal decorative feature as in the head from Katikati.

The Katikati head from the top is furnished with identical planes to those placed on the tip of the penis of the Te Puke baton. Size relationships between the two heads and shafts are as follows:—

	TE PUKE	KATIKATI
Overall length of head	11.5cm	13cm
Maximum width of head	5cm	6.2cm
Shaft diameter	2.5cm	3cm

It can be seen from this that the Katikati head belongs to a slightly larger object. The presence of notching on both, taken with the structural similarities, suggests that the Katikati head belongs to a baton or “godstick” of similar type to that from Te Puke.

The presence of three pairs of eyelids on the Katikati head and raised central eye portion evokes the style used on the *Tangaroa* figures from the Cook Islands (Oldman 1943, pl. 1, 2). The penis end on the Te Puke baton also evokes that of the *Tangaroa* figures (Oldman, pl. 3). The use of decorative notching could be purely a New Zealand feature, though may be related to similar decorations on other Cook Islands pieces (Oldman pl. 9, no. 381), or Tahitian (Oldman, pl. 10, no. 383, pl. 28, no. 371). Multiple lidded eyes are also present on Cook Island spears (Oldman pl. 22, no. 446, pl. 34, no. 443).

For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.  
Please contact Auckland Museum for more information.

Figs. 1, 2. Katikati head. 1. Front view. 2. Back view. (Photo: Dominion Museum)

### *Conclusion*

The Katikati head is probably from a ritual baton similar in form to the Te Puke baton. The decorative style of the Katikati head evokes style comparisons with Cook Islands, while the Te Puke baton has a penis end similar to the large Cook Islands staffs. It could be suggested that both the New Zealand specimens predate the development of classic Maori carving and that the use of decorative notches on chevron pendants or adzes of probable early date and on these pieces, suggests that we are comparing objects from New Zealand belonging to some time prior to 1500 A.D. with Polynesian pieces of the 18th Century. In view of the other pieces with East Polynesian art style resemblances, the Kaitaia carving in Auckland Museum, Uenuku in Te Awamutu Museum, and a canoe prow in Taranaki Museum, it is possible that in New Zealand we had either an undifferentiated East Polynesian style which was that of Polynesia at the time the Maori ancestors left, or discrete migrations from different areas of Polynesia. Considering the development of distinctive adze types and other features in the various island groups as recorded in the 18th Century, it is likely that art styles underwent a similar development. The early New Zealand examples may then represent more closely the original art style of East Polynesia before marked regional variation had occurred, even though the New Zealand examples themselves have undergone some development in New Zealand. The swamps of New Zealand thus continue to be an important repository for earlier style New Zealand carvings similar to the Polynesian.

### REFERENCES

- OLDMAN, W. O.  
1943 The Oldman collection of Polynesian artifacts. *Mem. Polynes. Soc.* 15: 1-86.